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Oyo NURTW leader, Eleweomo, killed

FRIDAY, 31 DECEMBER 2010 00:00 FROM IYABO LAWAL, IBADAN
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Oyo govt, PDP leaders iblame Senate Leader, Folarin denies

Scores injured in Ibadan as PDP LG congress turns bloody

THE local council congress of the Peoples Democratic Party (PPD) in Oyo State turned bloody yesterday resulting in the killing of a factional leader of the proscribed National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Alhaji Lateef Salako (a.k.a Eleweomo), an ardent supporter of Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala.

Apart from Salako's death, several persons were also injured in the fracas, which broke out in some parts of Ibadan and Oyo.

The NURTW boss was said to have been killed during a bloody clash between his supporters and that of the Senate Leader, Senator Teslim Folarin.

Reacting, the Oyo State government described Eleweomo's death as unfortunate. The Special Adviser to the Governor on Public Communications, Dotun Oyelade in a statement yesterday pointed fingers at Senator Teslim Folarin for the violence, which enveloped the council.

The statement reads in part: "Our attention has been drawn to the wanton violence perpetrated at Akanran in Ona Ara Local council, the home local government of Senator Teslim Folarin. During the rampage, he led thugs and armed policemen to the venue of the congress, shooting at will and some delegates, including Alhaji Lateef Salako, alias Eleweomo, was gruesomely murdered."

"How come that the peaceful congress was violently disrupted at Ona Ara, Folarin's home local government? They fear that the congress, as the results are emerging, will expose their electoral weakness."

Oyelade directed delegates elected at the ward and local council congress to troop to the Liberty Stadium today and vote in the state's party executives.

The statement implored the people of the state to remain calm, assuring that the government is on top of



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the situation.

Some PDP leaders also blamed Folarin for Salako's death, but the lawmaker has denied the claim and exonerated himself from the killing.

Salako, who has been embroiled in leadership crisis with his erstwhile boss, Alhaji Lateef Akinsola (a.k.a Tokyo) was killed at IDC Primary School, Olunloyo at Ona-Ara local council area where the PDP congress was taking place.

The NURTW chief who was said to have led about 15 lorry loads of his supporters to the congress venue, allegedly unleashed mayhem on supporters of Senator Folarin at the venue and forcefully dispersed them.

The situation became tense when Senator Folarin's convoy arrived as policemen attached to him allegedly shot sporadically into the air to disperse the NURTW men.

It however turned bloody when the hoodlums allegedly fired back at the policemen, which resulted in pandemonium and free-for-all.

By the time the dust finally settled, Salako was found dead by men of the Ogbere police station while scores of party supporters also received machet cuts.

His body was deposited at the Adeoyo Hospital mortuary while those injured were taken to a private hospital for treatment.

But in a telephone interview, Folarin denied involvement in the fracas, which led to Salako's death. Rather, the Senate Leader said intelligence reports at his disposal warned of a plot to assassinate him. Folarin said he was warned to stay away from the congress venue because of the presence of Salako whom he claimed stormed the venue with about 15 buses loaded with armed men.

He said he decided to attend the congress when he received news that many of his supporters who were already singing and dancing at the venue, had been injured by factional members.

"On Wednesday, at the commencement of the ward congress, I learnt Eleweomo and his people in about 20 buses had stormed my Ward 5, Idi Ose area of the local council. They were armed with guns, and on getting there, I enquired from supporters what the business of Eleweomo was.

"Today (Thursday) again, he and his people in multifold of the Wednesday's number, had besieged the local council brandishing dangerous weapons, arms and ammunition. And immediately, I recalled privileged information from an Ibadan-based prominent supporter of Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala's camp of the party that I should tread softly during these congresses because a plan had been hatched to assassinate me. Then, this made me to call the Commissioner of Police Baba Adisa Bolanta to alert him of the presence of Eleweomo and his gun-totting hoodlums, who invaded the lawful assemblage of PDP congress.

"Ordinarily, because of the threat message I got two days earlier, I should not have gone to my constituency to partake in the ongoing exercise, but as a politician, at times, you have to brave some odds, knowing full well that I had no sinister intention against anybody. Why would anybody be after my life? So, I went there yesterday and today and alerted the CP more than five times of the happenings in my constituency.

"And as a peace lover, shortly after our congress, I left there with my people and on my way home, I got information that Eleweomo and his men clashed with some members of the outlawed Odua Peoples Congress at the area. Even my convoy was severally attacked on my way home and this resulted in the death of two of my supporters while I also learnt that two others had their arms chopped off.

"If I had wanted to attack Eleweomo and his people, I would have done so since Wednesday because I have my orderly and security aides in my convoy. But I never did so and I now wonder why anybody would now link the death of Eleweomo to me and my aides. Not a bullet was fired by my men," he said.

When contacted on the development, the state Police Commissioner confirmed Salako's death but said he was still awaiting full details from the Divisional Police Officer at Ogbere police station.

When news of Salako's death spread to the city, his supporters took to the streets in protest while traders hurriedly closed their shops.

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